

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name Corbin, Joseph Carter, Gravesite

Other names/site number _____

Name of Multiple Property Listing N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number 863 Des Plaines Ave.

☐

Not for publication

City or town Forest Park

☐

Vicinity

State Illinois

County Cook

Zip code 60130

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: ___ **National** ___ **Statewide** ___ **Local**

Applicable National Register Criteria: ___ **A** ___ **B** ___ **C** ___ **D**

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Date _____

Illinois Department of Natural Resources - SHPO

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date _____

Title _____

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ Entered in the National Register

___ Determined eligible for the National Register

___ Determined not eligible for the National Register

___ Removed from the National Register

___ Other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | private |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - Local |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - State |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - Federal |

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | district |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | object |

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
1		site
		structure
1	1	object
2	1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY/graves/burials

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY/graves/burial

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: grave site

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation: _____

Walls: _____

Roof: _____

Other: Granite

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

Summary Paragraph

The Joseph Carter Corbin Gravesite is located in the Forest Home Cemetery, in Forest Park, a western suburb of Chicago. Corbin was a prominent Black educator who founded the first college for African Americans in Arkansas. His gravesite is being nominated as there is no other appropriate resource associated with his significance. The nomination consists of one contributing object, the headstone, which has sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register, and two non-contributing objects, the marker with Corbin's family and the commemorative marker which was placed in his honor in 2013.

Narrative Description

The Joseph Carter Corbin Gravesite is within the Corbin Family plot (West Front, Section F, Lot 44, Sublot D44) Forest Home Cemetery. The cemetery is adjacent to the Eisenhower Expressway straddling the Des Plaines River in Cook County, 10 miles west of Chicago. Forest Home Cemetery, located on approximately 220-300 acres in the village of Forest Park, is one of Chicagoland's most picturesque and historic cemeteries. The cemetery traces its history to two adjacent cemeteries, German Waldheim (1873) and Forest Home (1876), which merged in 1969. The cemetery was established as a non-religious-specific cemetery, where Freemasons, Romani, and German-speaking immigrants to Chicago could be buried without regard to religious affiliation. It had a policy of not discriminating on the basis of race, ethnicity or politics. Its design – with its curvilinear paths and picturesque landscape setting – is characteristic of the Rural Cemetery Movement which was popular in the United States from the 1830s through the early 1900s.

Corbin's gravesite is located near the northern border which abuts the expressway and is approximately one-fifth of a mile east of the river. Of the six burial plots purchased by Corbin August 3, 1909, only four were used. There is a large granite Monument with the surname "Corbin," dating back to 1911. According to the local Pine Bluff Newspaper, Professor Corbin purchased the monument for five hundred dollars.

The original Joseph Carter Corbin headstone is a smooth gray granite, upright rectangular, monument. The monument is approximately 5 ½ feet tall and consists of a plinth, measuring approximately 4 feet wide, 3 feet deep, and 1 ½ feet tall with slightly sloping sides; a pedestal, measuring approximately 3 feet wide, 1 ½ feet deep, and 1 foot tall; a stele or die, measuring approximately 2 ½ feet wide, 1 foot deep, and 2.5 feet tall; and a cap with sloping sides, measuring about 6 inches tall. On the obverse, on the pedestal, is the inscription, "Corbin" in bas relief. The integrity is good. It was erected in 1911.

At the foot of the "Corbin" Monument is a flat rectangular white granite marker with a smooth face and rusticated sides. It measures approximately 2 feet 6 inches wide by 1 foot wide by 6 inches high.

"CORBIN" is etched into the base. Below the surname the names inscribed are Mary Jane 1833-1910, John W. 1867-1909, William H, 1869-1929. Below the inscription is "Loving Wife and sons of Joseph." The integrity is good.

Carter Corbin commemorative headstone is rectangular, jet-black granite and consists of a die and a base. The top of the die has a low-pitched pointed arch. The front and back are smooth and the sides and top are rusticated. The base is 2 feet 6 inches wide by 1 foot wide by 6 inches high. The die measures 1 foot 8

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inches high by 6 inches wide by 1 ½ feet tall.. The inscription on the marker is in a sans serif font and reads:

Joseph Carter
Corbin,
Mar. 26, 1833-Jan. 9, 1911.
Founder of the University of Arkansas
at Pine Bluff. Father of Higher Education
for African-Americans in Arkansas.
Thanks for the gift of education to
countless generations.

The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Logo appears between the birth and death dates. On the back of the commemorative headstone the inscription reads:

Erected by Arkansas Black History
Commission Alumni and Friends of
University of Arkansas
Pine Bluff
May 27, 2013

The integrity is good. The headstone was erected in 2013.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☒ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☒ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education

Ethnic Heritage: Black

Period of Significance

1911

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Corbin, Joseph Carter

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

Architect/Builder

N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The gravestone of Joseph Carter Corbin in the German Waldheim Cemetery, now Forest Home Cemetery, is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion B for Education and Ethnic Heritage for its association with Dr. Joseph Carter Corbin, a prominent Black educator who became the state superintendent of public instruction and founded the first college for African Americans in Arkansas. The gravesite has statewide significance as a result of Corbin's contributions to the education of African Americans in Arkansas. The gravesite meets Criteria Consideration C for graves as the only remaining property directly associated with Corbin's productive life. The period of significance is 1911, when the stone was erected.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

African American Education in Arkansas

Before Arkansas' segregated public schools were established in 1868, there were religious based abolitionist groups sought to provide schooling to Blacks. In 1863, the American Missionary Association (AMA), a nondenominational organization focused on ensuring educational and political rights for Blacks sent a dozen Chicago teachers to teach freedmen in Pine Bluff, Little Rock, and Helena.¹

The existing conditions at the freedmen's camps were deplorable: they were afflicted with illness, lacked educational materials, and were vulnerable to Confederate attacks. The following year, an Indiana-based Quaker group worked with the AMA, soon taking over the programs at Little Rock and Helena. The AMA took on Pine Bluff, but without adequate funds and teachers, the schools could not retain a regular schedule.²

Reconstruction was a challenging period for ex-slaves who were assimilating into the society. African Americans were given new freedoms but were hampered by lack of literacy, schools, and teachers. In 1865, the federal government created the Freedmen's Bureau largely to oversee abandoned and confiscated property, but also to assist former slaves in becoming independent. Under the bureau the AMA was tasked with finding funds to educate former slaves. While they faced many obstacles, including insufficient funds, disparate receptions from whites, and unstable racial relations, by 1868 the AMA was able to establish 27 schools, 24 Sabbath schools, and two high schools.³

When Arkansas was reinstated to the Union, the governor created a public education system funded by tax dollars. The State of Arkansas' Act 52 of 1868 created segregated schools for Black and white students. Blacks had little choice when it came to segregation; the alternative in most cases would be exclusion, so they opted for substandard schools. ⁴ "In many ways Black Schools were often kept below the standards of white schools, yet they still stood as a symbol of hope." ⁵

¹ "American Missionary Association," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, accessed December 13, 2022.

<https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/american-missionary-association-4781/>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Segregation and Desegregation," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/segregation-and-desegregation-3079/>, accessed November 17, 2022.

⁵ Hopper, Shay, T. Harris Baker and Jane Browning. *An Arkansas History for Young People*, 4th Edition, University of Arkansas Press, 2006, p. 265.

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Under the law, AMA funded schools came under the control of the government. While some of the AMA teachers were able to transition into the new state systems, others were not. By 1878, the last AMA teacher who was from Pine Bluff, lost his position due to cuts in school funding.⁶

Joseph Carter Corbin

Joseph Carter Corbin (1833-1911) was one of eleven children born in the free state of Ohio at Chillicothe on March 26, 1833, to former enslaved parents, William and Susan Corbin, from Virginia. His primary education was in the winter subscription schools of Chillicothe, and he was home and private schooled. There were no free public schools in Ohio for colored children at the time. When Corbin was 16, he enrolled in a private school attended by free and slave students in Louisville, Kentucky, where it is believed that he readied himself for college.⁷

Corbin was accepted to Ohio University and became one of the institution's most distinguished and scholarly graduates of the mid-19th century."⁸ He entered Ohio University in 1850 at Athens at the age of 17 and graduated three years later in 1853 with an A.B. degree, the second African American to graduate. He received two master's degrees from Ohio University, one in 1856 and the other in 1859. After college, Corbin worked at a bank in Cincinnati and then taught school at Louisville, before returning to Cincinnati to become the Editor and Co-Publisher of *The Colored Citizen* Newspaper, a position which he held from 1853 to 1869. Corbin also was a member of the Board of Trustees, Cincinnati Colored School Board and served a second term. Proficient in languages and mathematics, his mathematical articles and solutions were published in the mathematical journals of the day. In later years, a Baptist College in the South bestowed upon him a Ph.D. degree.⁹ In addition to his educational achievements, he was an accomplished musician on the piano, organ and flute.

Joseph Carter Corbin and the founding of Branch Normal College of the Arkansas Industrial University

Corbin and his wife, Mary Jane (Ward) Corbin, migrated to Little Rock from Cincinnati, Ohio, during Reconstruction where he became a journalist for Governor Powell Clayton's newspaper, the *Daily Republican*. In 1872, he was elected Superintendent of Public Instruction on the Republican ticket, a position which he held from 1873-1875. As the superintendent, Corbin became president of the board of trustees for the University of Arkansas, and in that capacity, he signed the construction contract for the Main Building of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. His qualifications and his connections within the Republican Party enabled him to hold such a position, which at the time would be uncommon for an African American man. The building, known today as "Old Main," was modeled after the Main Building of the University of Illinois.¹⁰

While serving as superintendent, Corbin, who recognized the great need for teachers for former slaves, began crafting legislation for a college for African American students. On April 25, 1873, by an act of the Arkansas Legislature, Branch Normal College was chartered for the "poorer classes" for teacher education. Unfortunately, the establishment of the school was disrupted by the Brooks-Baxter War. The Republican Reconstruction government was overturned, and Corbin lost his position.¹¹ He spent the next two years teaching at Lincoln

⁶ "American Missionary Association," accessed December 13, 2022.

⁷ Finney, Gladys Turner. *Educator Extraordinaire and Founder of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff*, The Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, 2017), p. 19.

⁸ "Portraits of Progress, Joseph Corbin, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville." Here and There Among the Alumni, the *Ohio University Alumnus*, November 1946, p.14.

⁹ Some sources note this was an honorary degree.

¹⁰ Hopper, Shay, T. Harris Baker and Jane Browning. P. 265.

¹¹ Carl Moneyhon, "[Brooks-Baxter War](https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/brooks-baxter-war-)". *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/brooks-baxter-war->

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Institute in Jefferson City, Missouri, but he never gave up his house in Little Rock.¹² When he was vacationing at his home, former Governor Augustus H. Garland, now Attorney-General of the United States, requested an audience with him and engaged him to go to Pine Bluff to select a site and open Branch Normal College of the Arkansas Industrial University.

Corbin set out to inform Black Arkansans of this new opportunity. The article in the *Pine Bluff Republican* newspaper typified these announcements:

Tuition in the school will be free, the beneficiary is, however, required to enter into a written obligation to teach for two years in the schools of the state in consideration of three years tuition. The regulation applies also to such beneficiaries of the preparatory department as will be able, after one year's tuition, to enter the normal. The school will be opened upon rather a small scale at first, but additions to the number of teachers, etc., will be made from time to time, as the necessities of the case may demand. As the school is supported by the state, it is, of course, open to citizens generally, and we hope to see a large number of our colored youth avail themselves of its advantage.¹³

Corbin located an old, dilapidated frame house, built for a barracks during the war, that could be used for the school. The remodeling of the house and the delivery of the school supplies experienced unexpected delays and the college opened "in name only" on September 27, 1875, when seven students enrolled and began classes -- nearly three weeks past Corbin's projected start date.¹⁴

From the onset, Corbin faced major challenges running the school. These were outlined in his first annual report, which he gave to the board in June 1876:

Corbin described a year of frustration mixed with hope. He had found it difficult to find Negro students the proper age, qualifications, and necessary means tending. Governor Garland, as chairman of the board committee on Branch Normal, had authorized as beneficiaries all students who turned up, so long as the total number allowed (237) was not exceeded and so long as no county's quota was denied. The school began, then, as an elementary school, worked up to the high school level, and, before 1900, largely ignored both the "normal" and the "collegiate" features for which the school was intended.¹⁵

The 1873 state law that chartered the school specified that it would follow the same requirements and standards as those at the University of Arkansas's normal school. But Corbin recognized that the circumstances for Black students were different and made adjustments as he saw fit, with little oversight or objections from the board.

None of the students were prepared for college and Corbin had to develop methods to teach them according to their disparate skill levels. That was just one of Corbin's problems. There were many Blacks who were skeptical of the school and the promise of free tuition for beneficiaries -- those poor but

^{2276/} The Brooks-Baxter War took place in April and May of 1874 when a violent dispute occurred between the supporters of gubernatorial candidates Joseph Brooks and Elisha Baxter. It took the intervention of the federal government to end the war, and Baxter was declared the legitimate governor. Accessed October 6, 2022.

¹² Simmons, et al, p. 832.

¹³ Rothrock, p. 285. Accessed 30 Nov. 2022.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 285.

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 285-286.

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accomplished students. This sentiment not only made it hard for Corbin to attract new students, but it also made it difficult for him to collect the five-dollar matriculation fee that was required of every student. Corbin treated almost all the students as beneficiaries regardless. Since some counties had higher concentrations of Blacks than others, Corbin ignored the university regulations regarding quotas; his rationale being that the school was established to help the poorer classes. Based upon the first year's enrollment of 71 students, the school should have received \$355 in fees alone. Instead, the school brought in only \$125 received in tuition and fees.¹⁶

In addition to his duties as educator and administrator, Corbin also served as the school's janitor. The school building, which was not in the best condition to begin with, was built in a low area and constantly flooded. Corbin requested in his report that funds be allocated for drainage, sidewalks, and building materials.¹⁷

Despite these setbacks, Branch Normal College's university committee reported to the board that they were happy with Corbin. Under the circumstances, they thought he performed very well. Corbin agreed to stay another year.¹⁸

In the annual report for the following year, Corbin's dissatisfaction with the school was clear. His proposals to improve the school included, among others, adequate school facilities, additional teachers, and fee reductions or waivers. In July of 1877, the board responded:

1st. We deem it impracticable with the funds the command of the Board to secure for the Branch Normal School a more suitable building at present.

2nd. We recommend that the Branch Normal School be not removed to Little Rock.

3rd. When the number of students of the required age & possessing the requisite qualifications has reached forty we would recommend the employment of an assistant.

4th. We think it inexpedient to make any change in the matriculation fee, as it would offer a premium to students to enter for short terms and the present fee is cheap tuition for a single term.

5th. We think that the products of our Normal Schools should not be excepted from the requirement to procure certificates from County Superintendents or examiners.

6th. We concur in his recommendation that a separate circular should be issued representing the interests of the Branch Normal School provided the amount of matter printed be limited to the giving [of] such information as is absolutely needed by the Patrons of the school.¹⁹

Undeterred by the board's rejection, Corbin continued to lobby for a new school in a new location. His efforts finally paid off and in 1880, the board provided \$3,000 for land and a building. The funds were only enough to cover the cost of the land acquisition (20 acres) and architectural services, so the following year additional funds were granted to build and furnish the school. The new location on the edge of town made it difficult for

¹⁶ Rothrock, p. 289.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 290.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 290.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 293.

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students to find lodging, so Corbin requested that dormitories be constructed on the campus. It was harder for women students, as men were able to obtain employment as servants. The board finally relented and in 1897, funds were allocated to erect a women's dormitory, make building repairs, and buy supplies such as desks, stoves, and chairs.²⁰

Corbin oversaw nearly every aspect of the school and performed some duties at his expense or without compensation. He cleared the land for the school and saved the wood for fuel; he fenced the land to prevent others from trespassing; he oversaw the management of the women's dormitory using salvaged stoves to heat the building and \$1,000 of his own belongings to furnish it; he used salvaged lumber to construct a chicken coop and a washhouse for the women students.²¹

Corbin also worked hard to attract new students. He conducted Teacher Training Normal Institutes throughout the state to demonstrate new methods of teaching and to recruit bachelor-level students. He served as Jefferson County's Teacher Examiner for Colored Teachers.²² Over the next decade he grew the enrollment to 250 students. Under his tutelage the first African Americans in Arkansas received Artium Baccalaureus (AB), degrees (1882).

Despite his successes, there was little reward for Corbin. While he had some help from student assistants, he was the school's only teacher for seven years. His pleas for custodial help were ignored. Nonetheless, the board commended his work, as did the state legislature. At an on-site inspection of the school in 1891, a joint committee of the house and senate called Corbin "...a very zealous and successful teacher. We find that he commands the utmost respect not only from all of his pupils and teachers, but from all of the citizens of Pine Bluff."²³ Despite Corbin's efforts, however, most students did not progress past the preparatory stage. The school was limited to teacher training. He had trouble attracting new students and qualified teachers.²⁴ He had worked so hard to ensure Blacks could be afforded a traditional college education, and soon he would have to make a difficult choice.

The political climate in Arkansas was changing. Many Black voters who had once united with the new Democrats threw their support behind the newly formed Union-Labor party. This shift nearly cost the Democrats the 1888 gubernatorial election; some contended that the Union-Labor candidate won. The newly elected Democratic governor retaliated with allegations of voter fraud. Democratic leaders, intent upon punishing Black voters, introduced two bills in 1891—one segregated public transportation facilities and the other suppressed the Black vote in county and state elections.²⁵

Another hotly contested election in 1888 would directly affect Corbin's position at the school. While Corbin was not actively involved in the governor's race, he did support John M. Clayton, the Republican Congressional candidate for the second district, over the Democratic candidate, Clifton R. Breckenridge. Clayton lost, but due to suspicions over voter fraud, he challenged the results. During the recount, Clayton was murdered; the identity of his assassin was never discovered. The allegations of voter fraud were substantiated, and

²⁰ Rothrock, pp. 297 – 298.

²¹ Ibid, pp. 297-299.

²² Preston, Izola, and Morgan, Marion, Joseph Carter Corbin and the Normal School Movement, 22-29.

²³ Rothrock, p. 304.

²⁴ Williams, C. Fred. "Frustration Amidst Hope: The Land Grant Mission of Arkansas AM&N College, 1873-1972." *Agricultural History*, vol. 65, no. 2, 1991, pp. 115–30. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3743712>, Accessed 18 Nov. 2022, p. 116.

²⁵ Williams., pp. 116-117.

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Breckenridge was removed from office only to be reinstated in 1890 in a special election.²⁶ Allegations were made that some of Corbin's students voted illegally, which he fervently denied.²⁷

Confronted with increased racism from whites and an insufficient operating income, Corbin proposed to the University Board that Branch Normal College be included in the University's land grant mission.²⁸ Land-grant colleges expanded upon traditional college curricula to include agricultural and mechanical arts education, thus appealing to a wider range of students and securing a more consistent source of funding. The second Morrill Land-Act, which was passed in 1890, targeted the former Confederate states by requiring them to demonstrate that race was not a considering factor in admissions or to designate a separate institution for Blacks.²⁹

Corbin believed that whites would find trade and agricultural training for Blacks less threatening, so he focused on getting the school eligible for federal funding. Since the distribution of funds was up the states, Corbin and his colleagues worked diligently to sway the state legislators to approve the act, which they did in 1891.³⁰ The Board of Trustees voted to accept the terms of the law and the allocation was divided between the main campus at Fayetteville and the Pine Bluff branch, with Fayetteville receiving eight-elevenths and Pine Bluff receiving three-elevenths, resulting in \$4,363.63 for the 1891-1892 academic year. The branch received an additional \$5,000 to acquire land and construct a building for the new programs. Unable to successfully negotiate a contract with an out-of-state instructor, the Board settled on hiring William S. Harris from the Fayetteville campus to run the new programs for \$1,400 per year, only slightly less than Corbin's \$1,600 annual pay. Corbin's resentment over the salary and his distrust of the new educational approach prevented him from accepting the school's new direction.³¹

Matters became worse for Corbin. Less than a year after Harris's appointment, a legislative committee began an investigation of the school. Shortly after their arrival on campus, it became apparent that Corbin was the target of the investigation. Their report issued to the General Assembly in 1893, included several charges against Professor Corbin including "violating the admissions quota, admitting students without payment and neglecting the normal features of the school."³² The recommendation was that Corbin be fired for financial and managerial inability. While the legislators lacked the authority remove Corbin, the Board of Trustees had to take their recommendation into consideration. Instead of firing Corbin, they voted to keep him as principal but promoted Harris to Superintendent and Treasurer, a new position which gave him the authority over admissions, collections, and reports to the Board. Harris soon took over control of the school, with Corbin now reporting to him.³³ Historian Thomas Rothrock described the Board's decision as a sign of the times, but also called out the board for being callous and spineless: "It was an act in keeping with the rising Age of Jim Crow in Arkansas, to place this white "treasurer" in charge of the Negro school, but it was, nonetheless, as ruthless a piece of ingratitude and as cowardly a compromise as the trustees ever perpetrated."³⁴

Harris's primary backer was Branch Normal College Board Chairman, William H. Langford. Langford was a wealthy Pine Bluff businessman who was "ambitious to convert Branch Normal College into an "Arkansas

²⁶ Williams, p. 119.

²⁷ Rothrock, p. 308.

²⁸ Williams, p. 119.

²⁹ Morrill Land-Grant Acts, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morrill_Land-Grant_Acts#Land-grant_colleges Accessed 18 Nov. 2022.

³⁰ Williams, p. 117.

³¹ Williams, p. 118.

³² Rothrock, p. 308.

³³ Williams, p. 119.

³⁴ Rothrock, p. 308.

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Tuskegee,” modeled after Professor Booker T. Washington’s “Industrial Model.” There was a great political divide at this time over whether classical education or industrial education should be the model of education for Blacks. Being more taken with Harris’s mechanical aptitude than Corbin’s educational background, Langford promoted industrial arts to the detriment of teacher education.³⁵ Langford usurped Professor Corbin’s authority over the college with the concurrence of the Board and complicity of Professor Harris.

Corbin believed that this turn of events was retaliation against him for supporting Clayton in the 1888 election, but in order to keep his job and protect the school from further backlash, he tried to work with the new administration. This proved difficult as he found himself at odds with the way Harris ran the school. Additionally, Corbin became aware of rumors that Harris was acting inappropriately towards female students. Corbin reported Harris’s behavior to the Board in an 1895 report, but his complaints were ignored. The rumors continued to mount and soon spread to the community. When the student body appealed to Corbin to fire Harris, he had to confess that he was no longer in charge of the school and that he had little recourse given Harris’s standing with the Board.³⁶

The student disturbances resulting from the Harris scandal and the disputes with Harris left Corbin prone to attacks from his critics. He ultimately lost the majority support among the Board and despite all he had done for the institution, he was fired in 1902. ³⁷ Professor Corbin’s replacement was Professor Isaac Fisher, alumnus of Tuskegee Institute, recommended by Professor Booker T. Washington with the goal of making Branch Normal College the “Tuskegee of Arkansas.”

While Corbin was steadfast in his belief that African American youth must build their future on something other than farming and its related occupations, Fisher was equally passionate about the Tuskegee model. During his tenure Fisher worked diligently to implement the program but received little support financially or otherwise, from the Board of Trustees or the governor. The state’s Jim Crow laws threatened the institution’s funding. He was hamstrung by Harris, who controlled the budget. Fisher was also snubbed by many in the local Black community, who remained loyal to Corbin and saw Fisher’s emphasis on agriculture as regressive, harkening back to the days of slavery. This was not entirely unwarranted, for in the *History of Public Education in Arkansas*, a federal report by the U.S. Bureau of Education issued in 1912 (no. 27), author and historian Stephen Weeks included the following account:

In ante bellum days the negro received no education in terms of the school, and yet in the terms of life he was among the best educated of men. He had that education which made him of most service as a slave and which was of the greatest value when he became a freedman. He was taught the practical arts of rural life -- carpentry, blacksmithing, shoemaking, horseshoeing, farming, gardening, overseeing, and indoor domestic service. The women were taught to cook, wash, iron, sew, keep house, nurse, and do domestic service. This education was eminently practical; it was in the form which they could most easily acquire, to which they were by nature best fitted, and no time was wasted on the acquirement of theoretical or ornamental knowledge.

It is noteworthy also that in the organization of the industrial schools for Indian and negro pupils of the present day the ante bellum slave plantation system has been used largely as a model for

³⁵ Rothrock, p. 311.

³⁶ Williams, p. 120.

³⁷ Williams, p. 120.

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present day institutions and is as successful under the present day regime as it was under other conditions.³⁸

Ultimately, Fisher resigned his position.³⁹ The school returned to a teacher's college and remained autonomous, experiencing a series of successes and setbacks along the way, until it was absorbed by the University in 1970s.

Corbin, who unsuccessfully tried to regain his position at Pine Bluff, continued to be involved in the local Black community. He co-founded the Arkansas Negro Teachers Association, serving as its first president (1898-1904). He was president of the Colored Teachers Association in 1902-1903 and Grand Master of the Negro Grand Lodge of Arkansas. He was principal of Merrill High School after his forced retirement from Branch Normal College, a position which he held until his death in 1911.

Death and Interment

Professor Joseph Carter Corbin died January 9, 1911, at his residence in Pine Bluff. Since his death occurred prior to the statewide registration of deaths, he does not have an Arkansas death certificate. He was interred January 14, 1911, at the German Waldheim Cemetery in Forest Park, Illinois, according to his desire, design, and last will. On August 3, 1909, less than two years before his death, Dr. Corbin purchased a family plot of six graves. John Ward Corbin, the older son, was the first to be buried there, followed by Mrs. Corbin in 1910, Professor Corbin in 1911, and son William Corbin in 1929, whose death was due to an unsolved murder in Pine Bluff. Mrs. Mary Corbin died in Chicago. John Ward Corbin died in Pine Bluff while visiting from Chicago.

Professor Corbin owned property and maintained a residence in the South Town Township of Chicago. The Chicago Executor of his estate had the "Corbin Monument" erected per his will. Daughter, Faustina Corbin was reinterred (1886) from Oakland Cemetery, Little Rock, to Union Baptist Cemetery, Cincinnati, Ohio. The final resting places of daughters Pea, Josie and Louisa Corbin are unknown. Mortuary practices of the day excluded African Americans from white funeral homes; however, Professor Corbin laid in state at the white owned H. I. Holderness Undertakers in Pine Bluff.

German Waldheim Cemetery is the burial place of notable interments in aviation, industry and communications. Because German Waldheim Cemetery did not have racially restrictive burial covenants, Professor Corbin, as an African American, was free to choose it as the final resting place for himself and his family.

Criteria Consideration C: Birthplaces and Graves

In order for the Dr. Joseph Carter Corbin Gravesite to meet the criteria consideration for graves, there had to be no other extant resource closely associated with his significance. A survey of the properties connected with Corbin revealed that no properties at Branch Normal College remain from his time spent there. His home at 1821 West Second Avenue, Pine Bluff, is currently a vacant lot. Merrill High School, where he served as principal from 1902 until his death in 1911, was permanently closed in 1971 when school segregation ended. It was destroyed by fire in 1986; only the auditorium that was built in 1939 remains.

³⁸ Stephen B. Weeks, *History of Public School Education in Arkansas*. Bulletin, 1912, No. 27. Whole Number 500, p. 115. <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED543051.pdf>. Accessed December 16, 2022.

³⁹ Williams, p. 121.

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Initially, the original headstone could not be located. This prompted Dr. Gladys Turner Finney, author of *Joseph Carter Corbin, Educator Extraordinaire and Founder of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff* to erect a headstone for Professor Corbin, which was unveiled at a public dedication ceremony on Memorial Day, May 27, 2013. The headstone commemorates Professor Corbin as the founder of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and the Father of Higher Education for African Americans in Arkansas; the University Logo is etched in the center. Also added and dedicated at that time was a headstone memorializing Professor Corbin's wife and two sons. The Memorial Headstone Dedication keynote Speaker was U.S. Congressman Danny K. Davis who represents Illinois 7th Congressional District in which Forest Park is located. Congressman Davis is a graduate of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. A Resolution was presented by Mayor Anthony Calderone of Forest Park.

Legacy

Dr. Joseph Carter Corbin, known as the father of higher education for African Americans in Arkansas, created a pathway for other African Americans to achieve higher education. The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff was not only the first public higher education institution in the state for African Americans, but it was also the second oldest institution of higher education in the state. The university is still active today and serves a diverse student population, with over 20,000 graduates. Corbin's impact has been memorialized in the number of campus properties named for him, which include the following:

1. J.C. Corbin Student Teaching Center was constructed in 1947 for student housing and later converted in 1956 for work and lecture rooms, as classrooms for elementary and secondary teachers.
2. The current Corbin Hall was constructed in 1965 and originally constructed to house the teacher education program.
3. The J.C. Corbin Laboratory Training School (Elementary), was constructed in 1929. After it closed, it served the History Department until demolished in 1977.
4. The J.C. Corbin High School served as a laboratory for the training of secondary teachers. Constructed in 1947, the school ceased operation in 1953. The students were transferred to Merrill High School and Townsend Park. The building was demolished.

Dr. Corbin was inducted posthumously into the Ohio Civil Rights Hall of Fame, October 4, 2018, for his advancement of education as a civil right for former slaves and their descendants. His gravesite in Forest Park is also included on cemetery tours.

Conclusion

The Joseph Carter Corbin gravesite in Forest Park Cemetery is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B, for historic persons, for its association with Dr. Joseph Carter Corbin. Corbin was an important Black educator in Arkansas during Reconstruction, when the state had to be readmitted to the Union, restore the economy, and rebuild war torn areas. Political conflict between the Republicans and Democrats was rife, culminating in the "Brooks-Baxter War."

Professor Corbin's success was in part due to the policies enacted during Reconstruction, in which he was able to be elected Arkansas State Superintendent of Instruction and serve as President of the Board of Trustees of Arkansas Industrial University. He is believed to be the highest ranking African American official in Arkansas during Reconstruction. In founding the Branch Normal College in Pine Bluff, Corbin in turn provided African Americans opportunities for careers as teachers and principals in the emerging public school system.

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Professor Corbin's uniqueness in American history as an African American educator is that he founded a state, public teachers' college of higher education for African Americans during Reconstruction. No other known HBCU had its origin in a historically white public institution of higher education. Professor Corbin conducted grammar school and high school classes simultaneously with the collegiate. He conducted Teachers Institutes across the state to improve the quality of teachers. He introduced the Licentiate of Instruction (LI) degree which allowed the emerging public school system to thrive, a major contribution to secondary education in Arkansas with an available supply of African American teachers.

During Dr. Corbin's 27 years tenure as founder and president of Branch Normal College he produced the first African Americans in Arkansas with Artium Baccalaureus (AB) degrees. He co-founded the Arkansas Negro Teachers Association, serving as its first president, 1898-1904. He was principal of Merrill High School after his forced retirement from Branch Normal College, a position which he held until his death in 1911.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 41.871819° -87.823511°
Latitude Longitude

3 _____
Latitude Longitude

2 _____
Latitude Longitude

4 _____
Latitude Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Corbin Family plot (West Front, Section F, Lot 44) Forest Home Cemetery, 863 Des Plaines Ave., Forest Park, Illinois.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary consists of Joseph Carter Corbin's plot and headstone.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Gladys Turner Finney date _____
organization _____ telephone 937-837-0498
street & number 3955 Denlinger Road email _____
city or town Dayton state _____ zip code 45426-2329

Additional Documentation

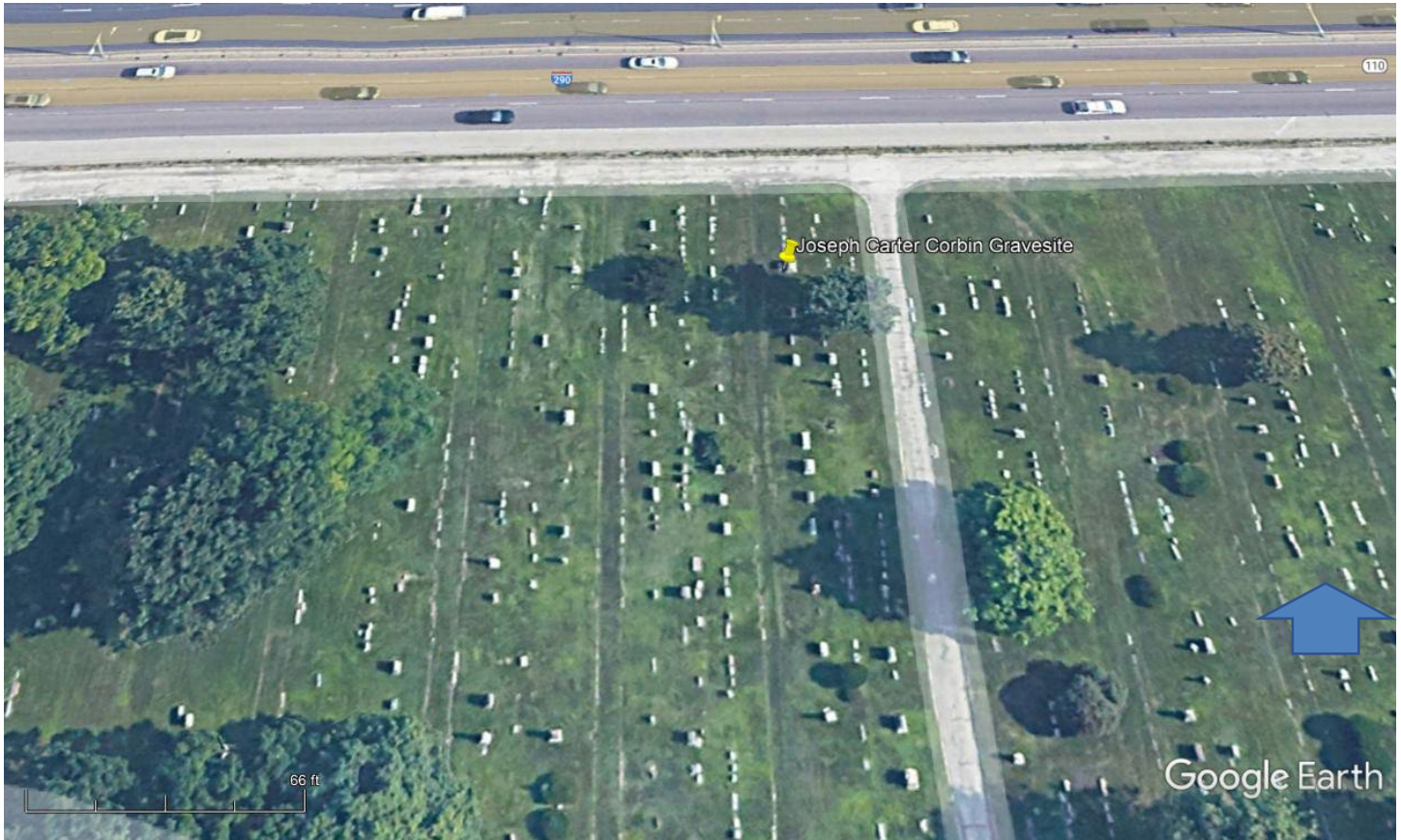
Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

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• **GIS Location Map**



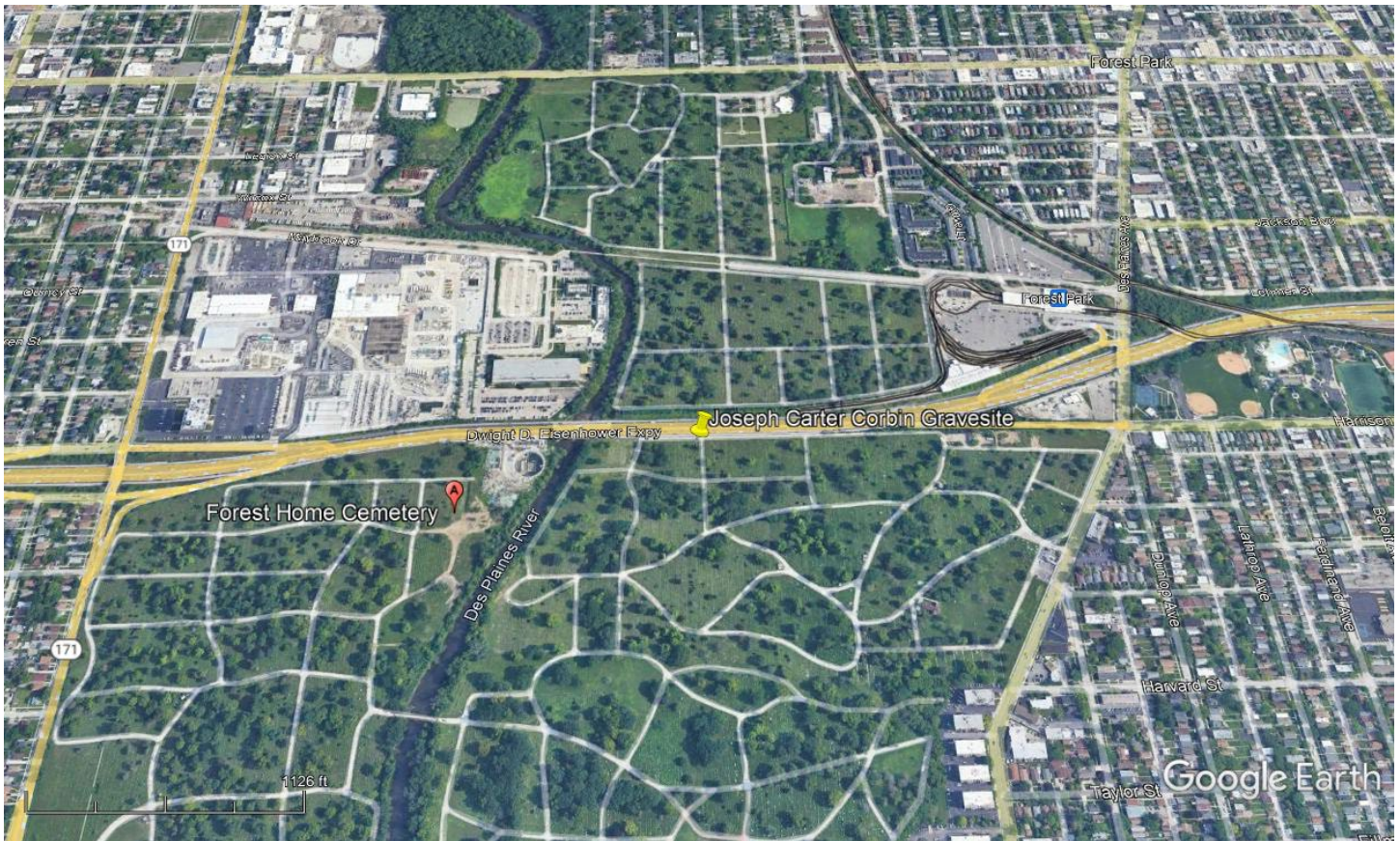
Joseph Carter Corbin Grave
Forest Park, Cook County, Illinois

Latitude: 41.871819°
Longitude: -87.823511°

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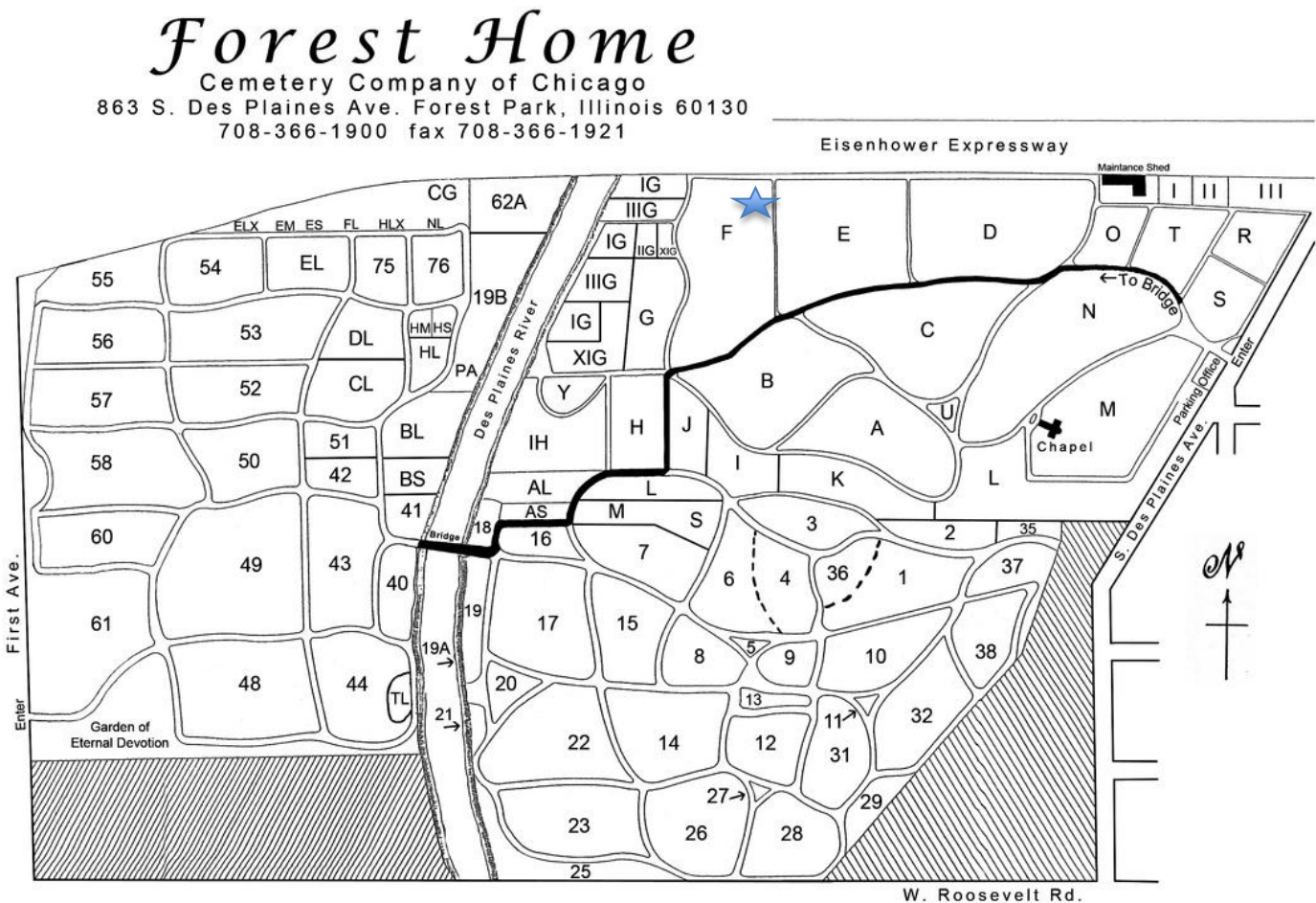
- Local Location Map



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- Site Plan



Star is approximate location of the Corbin Gravesite.

Source: Forest Home Cemetery Overview <http://foresthomcemetryoverview.weebly.com/map.html>

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property:	<u>Corbin, Joseph Carter, Grave</u>		
City or Vicinity:	<u>Forest Park</u>		
County:	<u>Cook</u>	State:	<u>IL</u>
Photographer:	<u>Dr. Gladys Turner Finney</u>		
Date Photographed:	<u>November 2019</u>		

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1. **Photo 1 of 5: front of Corbin monument and back of rededicated headstone, facing west.**
2. **Photo 2 of 5: Back of Corbin monument and front of rededicated headstone, facing northwest.**
3. **Photo 3 of 5: Corbin family headstone, facing down.**
4. **Photo 4 of 5: Front of rededicated headstone, facing northwest.**
5. **Photo 4 of 5: Back of rededicated headstone, facing east.**

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Photo 1 of 5: front of Corbin monument and back of rededicated headstone, facing east.



Corbin, Dr. Joseph Carter, Gravesite
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Photo 2 of 5: Back of Corbin monument and front of rededicated headstone, facing northwest.



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Photo 3 of 5: Corbin family headstone, facing down.



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Photo 4 of 5: Front of rededicated headstone, facing northwest.



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Photo 5 of 5: Back of rededicated headstone, facing east.



Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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List of Figures

(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all documents should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.)

Figure 1: Joseph Carter Corbin in Masonic apron and Square and Compasses pin, circa 1908. "Joseph Corbin," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/media/joseph-carter-corbin-in-masonic-regalia-8792/>



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Figure 2: Branch Normal College at Pine Bluff, ca. 1882. Rothrock, Thomas. "Joseph Carter Corbin and Negro Education in the University of Arkansas." *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 4, 1971, pp. 277–314. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40038082>. p. 290

